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The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish

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The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish

An Indian Romance

By

HARRIS T. DUNBAR

An old tale retold from the viewpoint of the Indian

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TO

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

WHOSE KINDLY PEN HAS GIVEN THE AUTHOR

THE TITLE AND THEME, THESE VERSES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

Preface

When the dour pilgrim, Persecution's son,
Ungentled by the milk of that shrew breast,
Upon this western land did set his foot
He found it peopled by a kindly folk,
In scattered hamlets and of numbers few,
Survivors of a decimating plague.

Most strange the traverse of the human mind!
That one galled by oppression's yoke
Should not have heed and teach his son
That ne'er injustice still his heart
And urge his hand to wanton stroke,
Is strange, surprising strange.

Most strange the traverse of the human mind!
That one who'd felt gaunt hunger's pinch
Could ere forget the hand that gave
A portion from a meager store,
Deprived itself to share distress,
Is strange, surprising strange.

Most strange the traverse of the human mind!
That one who prated of a Christ,
A gentle soul by every script,
Could do to others he would not
That they should do to him,
Is strange, surprising strange.

But justice be unto the mate:
Her heart, though chilled with fear for him
And for their children, ere did urge
To Mercy's practice and her act
Benignant both to friend and foe
By drear misfortune stricken low.

The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish

I.

To the sleeping youth Conanchet
Came the spirit of his father,
Miantonomoh, the sachem
Of the tribe of Narragansetts.

"Can it be thou hast forgotten
How the Yengees did betray me
To the hand of vengeful Uncas,
Sachem of the groveling Pequots?

"Thou art young yet, but prepare thee;
Go thou to the place of slaughter
Where the Wish-ton-Wish made eyrie,
There the pale face makes his dwelling.

"Naught is sacred to his land lust;
Turned the soil which drank my life blood
And the mound which gave sepulchre
To my body razed and scattered.

"Go thou there and reconnoitre;
Study that there be no failure;
When thou art come unto manhood
Strike! And strike till you have conquered!"

And Conanchet thus admonished
Straightway made his preparation,
Spared his mother of his purpose,
Said naught to the tribe about it.

Had he not been sure in woodcraft
Wish-ton-Wish perchance had 'scaped him,
For the work of demolition
All had changed that scarce he knew it.

In a palisaded clearing
Stood a cluster of log houses,
In their midst a ported blockhouse
Frowned o'er all for their protection.

And the forest all about him
Sacrificed to axe and fire
Held its shade at such a distance
That surprise became uncertain.

Stubble pricked his foot in passing
Where the field its crop had nourished,
And the charred stumps yet remaining
Mourned above the forest ashes.

Slow the processes of nature;
These for many years would shelter
Him who sought a covert nearing
To the walls of the rude fortress.

This advantage soon was useful;
As he lay in cover musing
Creaked the gate through the night silence
And a horseman left its safety.

Not long after came a woman
From the wall some timid paces,
With her eye the rider followed
Till the darksome wood prevented:

Then the moonlit field examined,
Fathomed all its darkest places;
Spurred by some too frightful picture
Flew to close the gate yet open.

Had the shadow told its secret?
Had his sparkling eye revealed him?
Bravely watched she at the postern
Opened at her husband's coming.

This digression gave Conanchet
A small chance to move unnoted;
But all his subtlety despite
Two well armed men made capture sure.

II.

The irksome days of his restraint
Dragged through their fruitless course;
No sign of careless watchfulness
Gave him a gleam of hope;
The latest survey of the wall
Took not from the despair
Implanted by his impotence
In previous survey.

No friend knew of his dreary plight;
Yet long hours at the ports
He gazed upon the free without
And watched for friendly sign,
Or listened for the wild bird sounds
Which to his cunning ear
The joyous knowledge would impart
That rescue was in view.

The white chief, an austere old man,
Came each day to the block
And prayed aloud in unknown tongue
Harsh to the baited boy.
But no unkindness marked his act;
Indeed the old man sought
By constant care of creature want
Repulsion to allay.

And in the oft repeated prayer
Conanchet could surmise
That he the moving subject was
Of seeming great import.
Whate'er to higher power said,
Whatever boon besought,
Unsoftened was the old chief's heart,
Unchanged the red boy's state.

One night a stranger followed in,
A man of equal age,

And long conversed they when the chief
Left the blockhouse alone;
The two remaining spent the days
Of many months together,
Although the stranger went at will,
But always in the night.

He plainly was some refugee
By the white chief protected.
Conanchet felt a fellowship
And yielded to its pleading;
So they grew friendly, and to pass
The time more quickly over
The stranger taught him of his tongue
That they might talk together.

This friend, indeed, moved the white chief
The boy's health to preserve
A guarded freedom to allow
Within the palisade;
Yea, even to the field one day.
This was Conanchet's chance.
Up and way, fleet boy!
Well done!—But in vain.

Thereafter to enclosure held,
Yet heartened ne'ertheless;
One chance he'd had—On speed the next!
Strength was his all-need;
And so he bided, ever watched
Peered for friendly sign
Which joyous knowledge would impart
That rescue was in view.

The irksome days of his restraint
Dragged through their fruitless course.
No sign of careless watchfulness
Gave him a gleam of hope;

But hope he must and mope must not
And garner strength each day
And knowledge of the white man
To meet his subtlety.

Season followed season.
Conanchet could but note
That the woman who had trapped him
Was sorry for the fact.
She sensed his knowledge of her tongue
But forced not his reserve;
And soon a bond of sympathy
Was evident to both.

Resentment spared her daughter small
Who to the mother clung,
And ceased her prattle when he came
Within her timid view.
Her stern grandfather she caressed
And played about his knee
Which shocked Conanchet's prejudice;
Was the white chief all cold?

To the conscience of Conanchet
Spoke the spirit of his father:
"Can it be thou hast forgotten
How the white man did betray me?"

"Father, no! Oh no, my father!
But the white woman is gentle,
Innocent her little daughter,
And the stranger gave me succor.

"The white chief has built his dwelling
On the spot by thy blood hallowed.
Cleansed it shall be, all deported,
That it gain its pristine beauty."

III.

How learned the tribe Conanchet was at Wish-ton-Wish?
Some traveler perchance had mentioned in some town
That he had seen a Narragansett there confined,
And Smith told Jones and Jones told Brown until no doubt
The rumor had been heard by Indian ear.

And did the mother hesitate to be convinced?
No! No! All know the fate of others of the tribe;
And if a Narragansett was at Wish-ton-Wish
It must be that he was her long mourned boy.

IV.

There came a day
When at the instance of his friend
Conanchet was, on honor, sent
To join the young men in a hunt.
At night, in honor, came he back
Though late, his freedom to prolong,
And crossed a trail whose portent thrilled
His heart most to the stopping.

Honor bright! Honor tight!
To the allurement of that trail
He stifled heed, compelled his step
To seek the palisade.
Much pleased he found all safe returned,
Their manner showed the doubt they'd felt;
Then banter and the day's tales told
Proclaimed their unsuspicious ease.

Would one make entrance to the fort
He first must blow upon a conch
Which hung upon the wall outside.
Thus had Conanchet done; and strange,
The refugee had joined him there:
And when admitted sought the chief
As on a visit from afar,
Preserved a semblance of rare meeting.

What was the object of this play
Conanchet never learned:
The stranger's plans were all upset
By unforseen events.
When several times a false call came
From conch outside the wall,
The stranger and another went
To scout—and brought an arrow.

And glad it had not struck.
"Quick! To the wall," from the white chief,

"And women, to your stations, too.
I with my friend will here advise
And join you soon." And thereupon
Conanchet felt the old chief's gaze,
Who, turning to the other, said:
"Can this boy have had hand in this?"

"No!" was the answer, "'Tis impossible,
Impossible of performance,
Impossible to his quality."
"I think you're right;
And e'er on either side a loss
Cannot you send the boy to treat?"
"I might," replied the refugee,
And turning to Conanchet, thus:

"Boy, is not this country wide enough
For white and red?
Wilt thou not effort make to stop
The slaughter that must come to thine
Whate'er our fate?"
Conanchet nodded yes.
And proud he went out through the gate
To seek his friends.

With loud acclaim was he received.
"Yes, there was the boy and well!"
And pressed to touch him.
Conanchet, to his errand bent
Thus spoke: "My friends, to rescue me
Many braves this life must end;
Many tepees mourning know;
And I may yet escape."

Then grave the sachem asked him this:
"Will further harm be done to thee?"
"No," said Conanchet.
"Thy mother weeps; her time is short;
All has been considered. Our answer
These arrows by a snakeskin bound."

And, proud in sorrow, to the fort
The backward way Conanchet took.

Oh wert thou mother in rude fort
Surrounded by a savage foe,
And the wood walls but held by few,
Compelled to quit thy baby's sight
To aid protection to that tot,
Would not thy speedy mind devise
Some last expedient to save
In abnegation all of self?

"Conanchet, by the grace thou hast,
I pledge thee to my little girl."
And soon, in life, her trust confirmed:
The first redskin who scaled the wall
Had brained the mother and the child
Had not Conanchet stayed his hand,
And sent him on to further quest.
"These two are mine," he said.

All soon the whites must to the block.
Conanchet took his charge aside
To safety; and, now free at last,
Struck no avenging blow.
No! No! His soul was filled with dread
As quick the acts of frenzied friends
Made all too sure the coming fate
Of his heart-comrades now confessed.

To the spirit of his father
Spoke Conanchet in his anguish:
"Miantonomoh, beloved,
Stay, oh stay this punishment!

"Did I not first rouse suspicion?
These are not the ones who struck thee.
Seest thou not that they were kindly
To one come in enmity?"

The whites confined within the block
Were safe against the red men's means
Save one. Soon flame took willing part,
By water quenched to spring again.
When water ceased Conanchet heard
The white chief's voice in prayer raised,
A hymn; then silence till powder's flash
Gave violence to grilling heat.

All leveled when next day the sun
At noon smiled down upon the scene,
Save that the well-wall, whence had come
The water used within the block,
Stood as a broken monument
Above the embers glowing yet.
Alone, Conanchet shed his tears,
Then followed the rejoicing tribe.

V.

Who is so just that he can weigh
The action of another,
Can lay his grab-to-self aside,
Eliminate condonement?
The common practice of a race
In time becomes criterion:
Customs vary—standards vary
In persons as in nations.

To give an instance pertinent,
Recall you that the pilgrim
Came from a country where the land
Was held in fee forever:
The Indian custom quite reverse
Admitted of no owner;
The land belonged to the commune
And had no certain portions.

How could the two in understanding meet?
Neither knew the other's tongue or way.
The Indian could conquest comprehend:
But here came one in amity, who used
A portion of his lands, as who might not,
And then would prive him of his friendly right
To use the same. Communism thus unkind
Was unknown to the practice of the tribes.

And in the custom of the English race
Whence came the right its king assumed to grant?
What alchemy his august form convulsed
That substituted him to the true owner?
A most persistent casuist
The pilgrim, yet his conscience
Had been most easy to appease
If he could feel clear title.

He spoke a mystic jargon
To Lo bewildering.

His greed found offense hidden
In Lo's most natural act.
Spoliation and contumely
Till manhood could not bear
Was followed by reprisal,
Savage as impotent.

Had the pilgrim not claimed conscience,
It might be said that he
Did as always had been done
And sensed no better way.
His wondrous capability
Had held them to his sway
Till education equalled them—
Combined the best of both.

Is "what is" right? "What was" was right.
Oh grim such axiom!
"What is" is not right. "What was," grim,
Though sanctioned all by nature.
Is nature then benign or grim?
Follow to the forest
And find her in state primitive
To note the kosmic urge.

Awesome tranquility pervades;
Remote ambition's moil
The splendor of the carpet green,
The mystery of shades,
Compel the soul to reverence:
In hallowed harmony
The voices of the senses tuned,
And lull to ecstasy.

Here surely fellowship serene?
The mirror of the brook
This realm of beauty makes two fold,
And hides no cruelty?
A trout jumps out and catches fly
And as it falls is caught.

A fledgling sparrow fallen down
The purling ripple drowns.

The hawk swoops on its quarry down,
The wolf tears injured mate;
Each denizen some weaker finds
To sate its appetite:
Tree blights tree to reach the light,
Grass smothers grass; and all
From the fallen nurture take—
At last themselves consumed.

Man, endowed beyond the rest,
Kills all with wanton hand,
Fights and kills to win a mate,
Kills and robs at envy's call.
Benign is nature that it gives
To all a certain heedlessness
Narcotic to attendant fear,
To their ease brave happiness.

VI.

The infant mind short sorrow knows:
And so our little girl
Forgot the kindness she had known
In kindness that she knew.

Conanchet's mother mothered her
As had she been her own:
All the Indian virtue taught
As well as Indian art.

Too immature to know white lore
When in the tribe she came,
She blossomed to an Indian maid
Like all, save her white skin.

The lily in Conanchet's tongue
Was Narramattah called:
Her charm and her chaste beauty pale
For her this fond name won.

O'er mother, son and foster child
The swift years took their flight:
Stout manhood to Conanchet came
Long e'er she was mature.

Her guardian ever; no soft fear
His presence could survive:
The tribe, too, felt his mastery;
Elected him to chief.

But e'er this honor to him came,
One time when meat was scarce,
There came a sachem, Metacom,
To counsel with the tribe.

As was her due, the mother sat
Within the council ring:
Conanchet and the young men kept
Aloof; yet could they hear.

The children ceased their noisy games
That silence might be full
Save the calm drone of Metacom,
Who to the tribe thus spoke:

"Miantonomoh, the wise,
I miss amidst your ranks;
I see a widow gaunt and wan:—
Doth hunger help to this?

"As with my friends I hither came,
No deer track did we see;
The beaver's dam in bad repair,
The birds are swift to flight.

"Your camp is hid in vale remote,
Surrounded by high hills,
The smoke consumed within the air
To distant vision lost.

"What dread, my brothers? Lurks some foe
Within a short march hence
Who has, mayhap, the game destroyed,
And follows with an axe?

"If that I guess your trouble sore,
It is because that we
Have known a greater injury
And think of remedy.

"My father had another son,
My elder, now no more,
Who sought by all the means of peace
That justice might prevail.

"Our game is flown; our children cry;
Deplete our larders stand.
The fields we shared, we share no more,
Our presence unwelcome.

"Each year finds some new law
By the intruders made:—
New law from them our land to rule!
Become we freeborn slaves?

"Nor are we free from violence.
Now are we to you come
To counsel and alliance seek
E'er all is lost.

"This done we seek the other tribes—
Yea! well I know your hate;
But animosities must stay
When preservation prompts.

"Struck Miantonomoh not first;
Led not in ancient grudge
The whites unto the Pequot homes?
How few were spared!

"I ask not that ye love Uncas
But that you bide and join;
That mutual wrongs an offset find
In mutual benefits.

"Oh would ye waste your brothers!
The white who wronged ye both
Will need less effort to his end.
How few are spared!

"If consanguinity have power,
Oh let it urge ye now.
Determination ne'er-the-less
Wait on wide debate.

"The warrior finds respite in death.
The mother and the wife
To glutted desolation prey
Should first be heard.

"What says the widow of your chief?
She knows one grief in full;
And mourned her son long as one lost—
What says her heart?"

As twitched her face
The widow long in silence sat,
Then, when calm had come,
Rose to her feet and said:

"The mother brave would have her son a man,
The wife her mate must hold in pride!"
And, sobbing, all the women rose
To draw aside.

The Narragansett sachem then
Would know what certain plan
The study of the Wampanoags
Had led them to adopt.

Thus Metacomet laid it out:
Their arms would not avail;
There must a preparation be
Till came the time to strike.

A white tribe dwelt in the north woods,
To the Yengees a foe;
From them could weapons be procured,
And must be as they could.

The Yengees must not know of this,
But should be led to think
The tribes were ill armed, scattered wide,
Unorganized, docile.

The council broken, the Wampanoags apart
Gave their hosts a chance to mull the thought;
Though Metacom the widow visited,
And learned the story of the palefaced maid.

And, stern repression softened by her charm,
She found a man of gentle thoughtfulness
To whom her brave Conanchet honor paid;
And she must yield her timid confidence.

For several days acquaintance riped.
Meanwhile the older men
In groups consulted or alone
Mused o'er the weighty theme.

The wives and mothers kept intrepid way,
The maids learned new temerities,
The eager striplings bided as they must,
The children changed the tenor of their play.

The elders when determination came,
Told Metacomet they would join with him;
To preparation should their means be pledged.
And, sad, the Wampanoags departure took.

VII.

Long lay this visit heavy on the camp,
And long trips must the hunters make
In search of meat and pelts.
The latter, when enough were stored,
Were taken to the far north woods
To change for precious freight.

And so Conanchet oft was absent long,
Much missed by maid and mother, whose fond hearts
Saw dangers that his strength did never know.
As oft their theme, to solace, they discussed
The mother felt the maiden's tenderness
Imported more than Narramattah knew.

One evening as upon the green they sat,
The murmur of the brook a pleasing song,
The moon just risen twilight to prolong,
And Narramattah toyed an amulet,
Which Metacomet placed about her neck
In loving farewell, asked the maid:

"Mother, tell me of the white folk,
Whence they came and whence their power.
Why does Metacomet hate them
And yet love me who am of them?
How did Miantonomoh
So incense them that they slew him?"

"Child, it is a dreary story,
One on which I dread to linger.
That oblivion might engulf it
Is my prayer. It will but sadden
If I tell it, and your loving heart
Will burden as might well be spared."

"Mother, share it. Have I not known
Ever kindness?

Art thou not Conanchet's mother;
Did he not save life for me?
The mere telling and the mingling
Of our tears will lighten thee."

For some time they sat in silence.
Then the mother told the story.

"Ere Indian dreamed of faces pale
There came a dreadful sickness here,
Beneath which waned the strongest forms;
And, where had been a num'rous folk
Became a scattered few.
Heavy was the hand of Manitou!

"Came home a warrior, Samoset,
Who far had wandered, and who told
Of pale faced people he had seen;
And made some raucous noises queer
He said were of their speech.
But all thought that his tongue was forked.

"Massasoit, then a young chief,
Whose second son is Metacom,
Stood one day amidst his tribe
Whilst from the sea a monster boat,
Of strange construction, held its course
Into an inlet close beside.

"And, as the anchor sought its bed,
Midst clanking of the running chain,
A tremor seized the timid ones
Increased to terror, when the ship
Stood motionless within the tide
And sails were furled which hid the view.

"For, on the boat were seen strong forms,
Of manlike action, but enclosed
In undreamed vestments, head to foot,

Save hand and face; more fearful still
The face was as the darkened foam
Of the dread ocean whence they came.

"A smaller boat dropped o'er the side.
This, filled and by long paddles moved,
Sought a safe landing, and when found
The inmates sprang upon the rock;
Except a few, who took the boat
Back to the ship to fill again.

"And when the repetition ceased
With heads uncovered, kneeling low,
They ranged about a standing chief,
Whose lips, for some time, moved as though
To some unseen form in the sky
Petition went. And then all rose.

"The tribe, with sidelong glances, watched
The face of the wise Massasoit,
To glean, from the expression there,
What portent he took from the play:
Much daunted by the spectacle
They rested till he gave command.

" 'My brothers, these be men as we
Though of a type before not seen.
And, to us unknown, how can they
Have enmity? They seem to be
Of such men as Samoset told.
Are not their women with them too?

" 'Can it not be that Manitou
Has sent these strangers to our aid,
To help us in our weakened state,
And teach us subtleties unknown?
Go seek Samoset!
Perhaps he can give welcome in their tongue.'

"So Samoset the strangers sought
With 'Welcome, whitemen, welcome here!'
And thus was friendly intercourse begun.
Most strange their ways seemed to the Wampanoags,
Which was the tribe in whose midst they were come,
And soon the news spread to the tribes about.

"Many of their implements you've seen,
And know what skill may fashion with their use;
And know the power of their firearms.
But had you never dreamed of such,
Would not your wonder turn to awe
Their magic was so strong?

"But they were kind; in some ways
Much the same as we.
Soon we found, their skill despite,
They needed help.
Sickness and hunger took their toll,
And misery was great.

"The Wampanoags shared of their store,
Showed them how to grow the grain
E'er yet the trees were gone.
Many died. But their great boats
Kept bringing more. Soon hamlets spread
Till in our range they came.

"In many ways are they to us uncouth,
Lack comprehension of amenities;
Of religion they are surfeit—prate of a kind God
In whose name they kill all who deviate
From their conception—Yes! At the stake
Women of their own are choked, hath Metacomet said.

"Long years rolled on.
The doting Massasoit held all in check,
Taught us from our homes withdraw,
Than strike a blow our wrongs to right.

At last, acknowledged to their creed,
Baptised his sons with Yengees names.

"And would we all would. How Miantonomoh
Their hatred did incur I do not know—
Perplexity for him to whom they talk.
They first induced him to hunt the Pequot;
And then, with Pequot, hunted him in turn,
And bared his breast unto the Pequot knife."

No more the maid her tears could hold,
And sought her head the mother breast.
Their joy in sorrow shared was short,
For called Conanchet, who by long day's march
Had cut arrival by a slow night's length,
And brought serenity into the camp.

VIII.

Hast seen a maid bowed fore a man,
Whose furtive eye eluded his
Lest it might blab her secret held,
And answer give e'er question asked?

Hast heard of man of prowess bold,
That all men yielded leadership,
Whose ready speech their wisdom was,
Yet flustrate by a gentle maid?

Thus Narramattah, the serene;
Conanchet thus, chief of his tribe;
His tongue, in ardent tim'rousness,
By indirection sought its end.

"When thy mother, Narramattah,
Bound me to your preservation,
Did she plead but of that moment—
Thy life saved was all fulfilled?

"My dear mother did not hold so,
But that duty e'er must ward thee
And her dying admonition
Urged me to continued care.

"Thus by both our mothers bidden
'Twere unholy that we parted.
Or thinkst thou different?
Tell me truly, Narramattah."

"I'm glad, Conanchet, thus to hear you speak.
No young man know I in the tribe throughout
Whom I would leave my brother's lodge to join
Or wed in content were it thy behest.

"Or has my brother chose one he will wed
And I am one too many in his lodge?

We three before the happy day doth come
Can build me yet a lodge, safe in thy sight."

"No! No! Narramattah, No! No!
Thou callst me brother as thy wont—
Oh ye two mothers gone before
All brotherhood I here renounce!

"Doth brother bless his sister and his chum
Or at her breathing of his best friend's name
Loose all consideration; and his brain
By the mere thinking swift would kill?

"Doth any moment of a day serene
Take on a gloom the sister out of sight?
Do dreams of her elusiveness so torture that he wakes
Nor sleeps again seized by his fancy's power?

"I love thee, Narramattah! And must wed
Or—Nay! I'll spare thee of my moan.
Wilt thou wed me?—Ah, my sweet wife,
My tongue cannot command the words.

"Why fall my tears?
Oh, do thou tell thy Conanchet
How thou lov'st—e'en though no word
Can add to what he knows."

"Not so tight dear heart—
And kiss me as thou saw'st my mother do.
How sweet thy strength—
Together can we face the world.

"Thy Narramattah can but babble—
Or rather, cannot—
It seems in silence must I pledge me."

IX.

An Indian runner forced his hidden way,
His lithe form winding through the forest dense,
That scarce a rustle made the parted twigs
As they swung back the passage to efface;
His silent foot chose fav'ring sites to tread,
And scarce a trail was left for searching eye.

As now he neared the goal his errand sought
The forest had become a vasty swamp,
To the white man a tangle; so that he
Was at great disadvantage, ventured not
To follow his red foes; his labor here
Became their ease his life to end.

Yet is some firm ground central to the ooze
To whose few acres must description jump.
An op'ning in the forest held a pond
Wherein two islands to the shore were joined
By a rude bridge of single logs composed,
Whose centre rested on the tiny isle.

So narrow was the moat by nature built
E'en noontide shadows from the trees could cross
And variegate the green of lily pads,
And kiss the open flowers,
And paint their shapes upon the waters,
That beauty yielded to the wooing.

But would protection ravage hold at bay,
It must the larger island quite enclose
With such a thick and tangled mass of hedge
That ne'er a glance could dodge its myriad leaves,
Nor body enter save through the block house
Which held the bridge, and frighted beauty not.

Within the Narragansetts felt secure;
Want or cold their thrift could here placate.

Our runner, now within the purlieus of the fort,
Gave chance to note his nation and his manner.
Accosted soon he followed to the chief
Who after some repast a council called.

"By Metacomet to Conanchet sent
I warn him and the members of his tribe
Our plans have been by Sausamon betrayed:
That Metacomet called before their bar
Was, in suspicion, suffered to depart
As they could not connect him to a plot.

"The traitor having ventured in our midst
Received the death his action merited;
For which, three of our men were seized and tried,
Condemned on 'cooked up' evidence,
Forthwith executed in contempt of our plea:
Propitious seems the time to white desire!

"The Massachusetts and the Nipmucks with us join.
Uncas and his Pequots hold aloof,
So cowed they may seek favor of the whites.
We trust them not! Their few we'll do without!
Delay but courts disaster;
Metacomet is already thus engaged.

"To give the old, the women and the young
A chance to find the shelter of your block
He, with his warriors, strikes a town remote:
To which the whites, when advised of the stroke,
Must hasten, find the hot trail and chase
To save the others of that neighborhood.

"But Metacomet plans from there to jump
To unsuspected, unsuspecting place,
Annihilation's easy quickly prey.
Repeating, thus to baffle and divide
The power of the whites until he hears
All are safely housed here, stores complete.

"Then, as seems best, either join you here
Or you join him; but all as time shall show.
Spoil would but hamper; or if sent here
Disclose the point they best could strike.
Slaughter's the word—which their confusion aids.
We'll kill them piecemeal! He'll keep you well advised."

This ruthless program desp'rately fulfilled
By those who felt no worse could be their state,
Who sought, if they must perish, to inflict
All injury possible upon the foe,
Spread terror midst the colonists;
"Some witchcraft Metacomet must assist."

X.

All animals in summer reproduce,
Their flesh untasty and the fur unfit;
But by the wayside many fruits abound
And roots, in succulence, are easy found.

The trees in leaf aid hostile secrecy,
The limber twig is silent as it bends;
The trodden grass soon heals its surface wound;
The dry earth takes no imprint: night is mild.

By all the Indian reasoning should war
Be to the milder weather strict confined:
The warrior, unburdened, strikes swift blow
And hies him home whose weakness tempts like fate.

Perhaps the foes like-minded meet half way;
Perhaps they miss and each finds easy spoil;
But each can guess what at the home might be;
'Twere well if they meet not on the return.

Frost, and the fall winds with chilling rain,
Change all; and by the Indian custom
Enterprise, part torpid but never quite unwary,
Bides the coming of another year.

A body of the Wampanoags
In middle autumn sought the block,
Where, now unto their families joined,
They rested, and adventures told.

And to Conanchet's leadership
They told of Metacomet's quest
Who, to the tribes beyond the hills,
Was gone to treat, with some few men.

But he would soon return; meantime
They sought to aid their allied hosts

As these might counsel, and complete
Provision for the next campaign.

The grain, for some time harvested,
Was stored within the wigwam walls,
That it might some protection give
From missiles seeking those within.

Some hunted for the meat and furs;
Some fished with nets or jagged spear;
The squaws the provender would dry
That plenty might divide with want.

The children romped as children do,
Yet willing help they gave betimes,
And old and young occasion took
For games and chat, or sang wierd songs.

Jack Frost was crabbed though that year,
And forced the water quick to freeze;
The swamp became a glassy floor
A handy ball-ground blithely used.

Through the cover of the pond
The spearman drew the writhing fish;
Down the island's snowy slopes
Kiddies scooted on bark sleds.

Narramattah and Conanchet
Shared in full exhilaration;
Human kindness ever leading
Hosts and guests one family.

Across the open swift a running brave,
Whose features drawn his portent news foretold,
That all who saw quick hastened to the chief
Or sought in hurry those within near call.

The runner panted out his baleful tale—
"The Yengees come."

"Quick light the signals," Conanchet gave the word;
Lucky those too far to reach the block.

As these approached, the quick repeating shots
Told of grim battle through which no entry.
So they must lurk without in bitter cold,
Trap the unwary or harry when the whites retreat.

Within, Conanchet made determined fight—
A party which sought the gate to rush
Were driven back—
The dead and wounded froze upon the ice.

Out, from the circle of the trees
The whites poured forth a murd'rous fire.
The women had many wounds to dress;
Ere night fell many braves were dead.

Their proud fort was untenable;
When darkness came those who could sought safety
Ran the gauntlet of blazing rifles,
Killed as they might, and found the wood.

Many fell; but better 'twas to save a few
Than that all perish.
Oh bitter night! Cold took an awful toll.
Hunger added its distress e'er friends were reached.

The whites soon rushed the weak remaining.
The old, the wounded and the children
Were shot at sight; or perished in the flames
Of wigwam and granary ruthlessly destroyed.

XI.

Great the torment of Conanchet!
Narramattah sympathetic
Hid her suff'ring; ever cheerful
Sought by winsome ministration
Or by grief expugning chatter
To change the bent of his dread musing.

How irked her futile cooing!
No word she said her pinched face filled,
No glance but took his wan companions,
His ears no prattle heard,
No counsel from the sages,
No hope some might be diff'rent than he knew.

The stragglers, welcomed to the camp,
But added to his woe;
They told of hov'ring near the block
To find perchance midst embers black
Some food unburned; or breathing friend,
Saved by the conflagration's warmth.

The whites had quick dispersed.
Though they the Indian stores destroyed
Yet unprovisioned quite were they,
So gaunt they could not make pursuit.
Conanchet voiced accusing thought,
"Had I remained the fight was ours."

"My son," said Metacomet, "you but did
What seemed best as you conditions knew.
Cease repining,
And prepare for revenge.
Wish-ton-Wish, by Miantonomoh hallowed,
Is again populated."

In frenzy worked Conanchet
Scarce grudged his troubled sleep

And Narramattah fearful,
Yet welcomed his changed tenor;
Time, the great abrador,
Soothed both to calm control.

Spring hastened. When the ground was firm
The Indians moved on Wish-ton-Wish,
One glorious morning crept to its edge,
But not unnoted;
A greyhead white, from his high hill,
Had seen, and rushed to warn the folk.

The homes outlying first surrounded
Were tenantless and put to torch,
As spread the warriors for vantage.
Soon the interchanging bullets
Sought to strike the forms unsheltered;
Many hits and many misses.

Then a party from the stockade
Led by the old man who warned them,
Sortied midst adjacent buildings
By the Indians not yet compassed;
Dodging, shooting, killing, dying,
Checking Conanchet's advance.

For the eager Narragansetts
To one side pressed round the village,
But must first this party slaughter,
Get between them and the stockade,
And swing round them out of gun range,
Dodging, shooting, killing, dying.

Then behind there struggled towards the post
A woman hanging to the arm
Of an armed man; the while
Two aged men kept guard with rifles fore,
One of which was this same greyhead white
Whose virulence again was evident.

But too late! The last defender slain
The Indians rushed upon this party.
Bang! Bang! Bang! the empty rifles clubbed,
A scuffle with quick end,
And four devoted to the stake
Stood in the Indian midst.

Before his unbelieving eye
Conanchet saw the mother of his wife,
Weak and wan as one who'd suffered much;
Her husband, somewhat aged;
Erect and sturdy, the grim white chief;
The refugee, who all had warned.

A guard to keep them safe assigned
He hastened to the field
To seek Metacomet,
And find what portent he
Put on this prodigy:
And felt himself to know he were awake.

"Conanchet this cannot be.
Didst thou not see the flames consume
The block which held them all?"
"Yes, yes," said Conanchet,
"But come thou and question the white chief.
I've sent for Narramattah."

"White man," said Metacomet,
"By what magic art thou alive?
Many of our warriors here
Saw the log fort burn o'er thy head;
Yes, and over these thy people.
What spell has saved thee?"

"No magic, Indian!
See yonder the ruins of a well?
When water failed we crept within its cool.
See'st thou not, heathen, how God's hand
Protects His children?"
"See if He save you now," said Metacomet.

Then in the Indian tongue he said,
"Conanchet, how simply were thy warriors fooled.
Give them to the stake—
Take thy revenge!
"No," said Conanchet, "these people live—
Or Conanchet dies."

"What! My Son!
Hast forgotten the Narragansett village?
Hast forgotten Miantonomoh?"
"No! Miantonomoh has fashioned all
That I, his son, may keep my trust.
See! Here comes Narramattah.

"His spirit, the guardian of this plain,
Repentant, brought us all together.
No more I fight upon this field!"
"No?" hissed Metacomet.
Hands sought knife—Forbearance won:
And Metacomet led his men into the woods.

In the grim warrior
From whose girdle hung a dripping scalp
Nought recognized the whites
Of captive boy:
And the tanned princess tall, serene,
In recollection was but baby still.

"Narramattah look!
Does the white woman to your heart recall
The mother that but dwelt within thy dreams?
Search, Narramattah, search!"
"Ruth Heathcote! Here is thy daughter!
Conanchet has kept his pledge."

As heart to heart they pressed, through flowing tears
Each made keen survey of the other face.
"My dear, dear child," said Ruth. The maiden's tongue
Did utter baby words by mem'ry thrust.
And Narramattah, by Conanchet's honor bound,
Docile to her fate, watched him depart.

XII.

Poor Indian maid!
What hope to comprehend her friend's desire,
Their repugnance to her all—
Mind and body in heathen defilation—
In eagerness they pierced her quick
Nor knew their bigot harshness.

XIII.

They must plant grain.
Conanchet and a few
Sought friends, not yet disturbed,
To know if their stock might partition bear:
And on this quest, near compassed,
Must seek the safety of the runner;
By fleetness, cunning, tempered striving,
Make endurance bring them winner.

Unnecessary trappings from him cast
Conanchet in his strength felt all secure.
Yet when the foe his belt of peag observed,
Exertion doubled fugitive now known.
Conanchet sought a creek-bed, stumbled, fell,
His rifle soaked he yielded without blow,
Convinced that fate would have it so:
By Pequot captors taken to the whites.

"But give up Metacomet wouldst thou live"—
"No? Then send one with us to his lair?"
"I know of none would be so low"—
"Then to thy death," they said.
And to the waiting Uncas now returned
To whose will was his body grant,
Save torture or dismemberment,
He passed forever from the white man's ken.

But we will follow.
The grim Uncas, sated of revenge,
Did halt his hand, and offer fair did make
That his few numbers would forget, and, glad,
His quality unto themselves would band.
"No, Uncas, I am not Pequot—
But would a day's respite to seek another.
We'll meet tomorrow e'er the sun is hid."

Narramattah, wakened in delight
Could scarce conceive the stillness of the night

Broken by Conanchet's call.
Again his bird-like note; and all alert,
Disturbing none in cunning eagerness,
She hastened to the wood without to find
Anticipation's hope had fruited full.
Enquiry was by ecstasy o'ercome.

Poor child!
Again the lover's honor held her fast.
Hand in hand they set on the return;
Burdened, tranquil,
A thousand tendernesses each for the other had:
Unwilling words were not breathed out.
Hand in hand returned to Uncas;
Hand in hand faced executioners.

"One moment, Uncas, I'll tell you when"—
"My love! Forgive me that I brought you here.
Our oneness seemed to hold you to my end.
My race doth find its cease in gloom.
But happy I who knew thy love;
And die consoled that thou, of stronger race,
Art to thy parents reunited
As I go now join mine."

To the spirits of his parents
Spake Conanchet, head upraised,
"Miantonomoh and mother I am coming!
I have not understood."

"Ready! Uncas. Farewell, dear love!"
Narramattah, his hand pressing,
Watched the raising of the rifles,
Watched the fingers press the triggers:

Ere the flame flashed from the muzzles
Quickly swung herself before him—
And the bullets bore her life blood
That gave unto his life its ending.

SEQUEL.

Ruth Heathcote soon followed her daughter. To learn the fate of Metacomet read "Philip of Pokanoket," by Washington Irving, whose master pen has pictured it beyond my effort. Read! Please read! But even he knew not, or tells not, the disposition of Metacomet's wife and son. They were sold to slavery in Cuba. Read Washington Irving's Columbus to learn the disposition of the native Cuban.

All hail the bold Buccaneer!
An honest soul was he!
He struck when first he found
Not after he partook.

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